

To: CN=Ayn Schmit/OU=R8/O=USEPA/C=US@EPA[]
Cc: []
From: CN=Dedre Henderson/OU=R8/O=USEPA/C=US
Sent: Thur 9/27/2012 9:10:36 PM
Subject: Re: Hydraulic Fracturing & Natural Gas News-September 27, 2012
<http://intranet.epa.gov/desktop/>
<http://esweb.bna.com/eslw/#>
 Tripp Baltz
 two new reports
 237 DEN A-15, 12/9/11
 Tripp Baltz
<http://pubs.usgs.gov/ds/718/>
<http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2012/1197/>
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/epalibsurvey>

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Best,
Dedre

187 DEN A-10

Drilling

USGS Releases Reports on Sampling

Of Contaminated Groundwater in Wyoming

By Tripp Baltz

DENVER—The U.S. Geological Survey released two new reports Sept. 26 on groundwater contamination in a natural gas field near Pavillion, Wyo., that the Environmental Protection Agency had previously linked to hydraulic fracturing.

The USGS reports relate to groundwater quality, quality control, and well yield data at Pavillion, but did not draw any conclusions about the sources of any contamination. EPA in December said groundwater contamination was “likely associated with gas production practices, including hydraulic fracturing” (237 DEN A-15, 12/9/11).

Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, involves the high-pressure injection of water, sand, and chemicals deep underground to release oil and natural gas. Opponents of fracking say they are concerned that it could cause contamination of drinking water supplies.

In the December field report, samples taken from two EPA deep monitoring wells in the aquifer in Pavillion indicated the presence of synthetic chemicals consistent with gas production and fracking fluids. The agency also found benzene concentrations well above Safe Drinking Water Act standards, in addition to high methane levels.

‘Generally Consistent.’

The USGS data are “generally consistent” with the groundwater monitoring information released earlier by EPA, Alisha Johnson, spokesman for EPA in Washington, told BNA. Once finalized, the latest EPA data, along with the USGS data, will be submitted to an independent peer review as part of an ongoing scientific process later this year, she said.

Unlike EPA in December, USGS did not draw any conclusions about the results of the new sampling of the two monitoring wells, which was conducted in April at the request of Wyoming and in coordination with EPA.

"Today's USGS reports are intended to provide additional scientific information to decision makers and all interested parties on the composition of the groundwater represented in the aquifer underlying Pavillion," said David Mott, director of the USGS Wyoming Water Science Center.

"While USGS did not interpret the data as part of this sampling effort, the raw data results are adding to the body of knowledge to support informed decisions," he said.

Process an Improvement, Governor Says

Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead (R) said the USGS reports allowed state experts "to have a say about sampling methodology and testing procedures." He said he felt the process used to acquire the data was "an improvement on the process used for the draft EPA report last December."

The first USGS report describes the sampling and analysis plan that was developed to collect groundwater data, the survey said. The second provides the raw data and information from the groundwater-quality samples.

EPA installed the two deep monitoring wells, MW01 and MW02, in June 2010. While USGS collected groundwater-quality data from MW01, it did not collect such data from MW02.

Because MW02 had a lower water yield, or less water flow into the well, USGS was not able to use the sampling method that it traditionally uses for wells, Dave Ozman, spokesman for USGS in Denver, told BNA.

Proves EPA Process Was Flawed, Company Says

Doug Hock, spokesman for Encana Corp. in Denver, told BNA the fact that USGS gathered groundwater-quality data from only one of EPA's two monitoring wells confirms something industry has said all along: EPA's sampling at Pavillion was flawed. Alberta-based Encana Corp. owns the natural gas field in Pavillion.

"Specifically, the report seems to indicate that USGS declined to sample MW02 because the well could not provide a sample that was representative of actual water quality conditions," Hock said. "This goes to the heart of concerns raised by state and federal agencies, as well as Encana—EPA's wells are improperly constructed."

Hock said Encana recently sent the EPA administrator a letter urging the agency to make available certain documents relating to Pavillion. Encana needs the documents to give full feedback on EPA's draft report, which is due Oct. 16.

The delay in making the documents public "jeopardizes the ability of Encana and others to provide meaningful comments" by the deadline, the letter said.

By Tripp Baltz

For More Information

The USGS reports are available at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/ds/718/> and <http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2012/1197/>.

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Dedre Henderson, MLIS | Librarian

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